

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

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JAPANESE PRINTS ON VIEW AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Japanese Woodblock Prints: Themes and Techniques, an educational exhibition that explores the variety of traditional Japanese prints, opens at The Cleveland Museum of Art September 3 and will be on view through October 19, 1980. Twenty-one prints from the Museum's large collection, and four prints lent by Cleveland collector Kelvin Smith, were chosen by Marjorie Williams and Mark Johnson, instructors in the Department of Art History and Education, for the thematic show.

Its themes are those important during the Edo Period (1615-1868), when Edo (Tokyo), even then one of the largest cities in the world, was the home of Japan's merchant class and, for part of each year, the samurai. The Emperor required the samurai to leave their estates and spend certain months in the political capital. This rich proud warrior class quickly became a dominant force in Edo, spending money freely and enriching the city's lower-class merchants. Forbidden public display of their new wealth, by government edicts, the merchants became enthusiastic patrons of Kabuki theater and of Yoshiwara, the licensed brothel district.

The woodblock print became a popular art form in the eighteenth century because it met the increasing demands of patrons for souvenirs of their idols, the courtesans and actors. These prints are generally called Ukiyo-e, "pictures of the floating world," because they illustrate the unreal theatrical world and the transient glamorous life of the Yoshiwara. Mass-produced and sold at very low prices, Ukiyo-e prints captured the imagination of Western artists in the late nineteenth century, and they still attract Western collectors and museum visitors.

Because the Museum's extensive collection of woodblock prints must be exhibited in rotating fashion in the small permanent gallery set aside for them, this special

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exhibition in the Lower Level Education Gallery offers the public an opportunity to see and study prints that are rarely on exhibition. Wall labels will introduce each section of the show, which includes scenes of daily life and landscape prints as well as Kabuki and Yoshiwara scenes.

Step-by-step illustrations of the intricate process involved in the creation of a single, colored woodblock print will be a feature of the show, along with a selection of tools used by woodblock artists and printers.

To complement the exhibition, Marjorie Williams and Mark Johnson will present a series of lectures and films on Thursdays at 1:30 p.m. Ms. Williams will lecture on September 18 on the history and techniques of Japanese prints, and Mr. Johnson will discuss their influence on Western art in a lecture on September 25. Two short films, Centuries of Print (27 minutes) and Kabuki (30 minutes), will be shown on October 2.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Relations Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.